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LONG SHADOWS PART THREE

TRIPWIRES

I've spent years as a student of my own behavior. And I mean that in the least egocentric way.

When you devote much of your life to putting your life on the line, you have to take great care in what you do and how you do it. There's very little room for carelessness.

Carelessness is born of complacency. Or out of cockiness.

Sometimes it's a combination of the two.

That said, you can learn from your mistakes. You dissect the situation, find where you erred, and plan for "next time."

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*That is, if you haven't screwed
up so royally that you might
not survive your own idiocy
for there to be a next time.*

*If it seems like I'm being too
hard on myself, it's just because
two major league psychopaths
are trying to kill me.*

THE *ENEMY*
HAS BEEN MET.
TARGET
ACQUIRED.

OH, SO
YOU LIKE THIS,
SOLDIER BOY?!
GOOD! WELL--
BOORAH!

BOORAH!

*The walking dirt pile is of
course, Clayface. Newly
liberated from Arkham Asylum.*

*And I believe his running
buddy is Lyle Blanco, a one-time
Arkham resident as well.*

*Not to mention a
former special forces,
black bag operative.*

*And upon his return
from duty in the
desert, a serial killer.*



A formidable team.
I'm at a loss as to
what brought this odd
couple together.



But at the moment,
their motivations
aren't really my
highest concern.



Let's just
end this.



End it quick.





YOU'VE
GOT LOTS
OF TOYS!



I think that he can maneuver and
talk through all this gas. He's got
more on board than I thought.



I underestimated him.

Cocky. Complacent.



Careless.



MEANWHILE...

IF I HIRE YOU, I'LL TELL YOU *WHERE* WE'RE GOING. RIGHT NOW, I JUST NEED TO KNOW IF YOU CAN GET ME THERE.



I'M NOT AGREEING TO *ANYTHING* WITHOUT DETAILS.

I'M WITH HIM.

I HAVE TO CONCUR THAT I HAVE SOME *RELUCTANCE* TO ENGAGE IN ANY ACTIVITY WITHOUT KNOWING--



SHUT UP. ALL OF YOU. GODALMIGHTY, I HAD NO IDEA THAT *TELEPORTERS* WERE SUCH A WHINY BUNCH.

YOU'RE BEING PAID *EXTREMELY* WELL. JUST SIT HERE AND ANSWER A FEW OF MY QUESTIONS. ANSWER 'EM, YOU GET EVEN *MORE* MONEY. TAKE THE JOB. AND IT'S LIKE WINNING THE *LOTTERY*.



SO, FROM THE TOP...CAN YOU TELEPORT TO AN *UNKNOWN* LOCATION IF YOU'RE GIVEN AN OBJECT FROM SAID LOCATION? I WAS TOLD YOU ALL HAD AN *AFFINITY* FOR THAT SORT OF MOVE.

THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAID.



DO YOU WANT TO GO TO THE *LAST* PLACE THIS OBJECT WAS AT?

I CAN DO THAT.

NO. I KNOW WHERE IT WAS *FOUND*, AND THAT DOESN'T INTEREST ME.



BUT TO ANSWER
YOUR QUESTION,
NO, I DON'T KNOW
WHAT HE NEEDS YOU
TELEPORTING
PEOPLE FOR. I'M
PRETTY MUCH KEPT
ON THE NEED-TO-
KNOW BASIS.

JUST
HIRED
MUSCLE,
HUH?

YEP. JUST
MUSCLE.

CHOON

YOUR
TELEPORTING...
IS IT *MAGIC*?

DEFINE
"MAGIC".

SUPERMAN
FLIES THROUGH
THE SKY, IS *THAT*
MAGIC? I DON'T COOK
SALAMANDER EYES
WITH VIRGIN BLOOD
IN A CAULDRON TO
ACTIVATE MY POWER.
IF *THAT'S* WHAT
YOU MEAN.

BUT I'VE ALWAYS
BEEN ABLE TO TAP
INTO AN OBJECT'S
SOURCE. IT'S PLACE
OF ORIGIN.

FAIR
ENOUGH. WE'LL
DO A FEW TEST
RUNS WITH SOME
OTHER STUFF. IF
YOU CAN CLEAR
THOSE HURDLES,
WE'LL GO FOR
THE BIG RIDE.

CAN YOU
TELL ME NOW
WHERE WE'RE
GOING?

SURE.

WHEREVER
THIS WAS
MADE.





OH,
THIS ISN'T
ANYTHING I
COULDN'T DEAL
WITH **GOLD**. I
JUST WANTED
MY **HANDS**
FREE--



--FOR A
BIT OF
**FACT-
FINDING**.



**CONFRONTING
TARGET!
ENGAGING
HOSTILE!**



SURE.
LET'S GET TO
KNOW ONE
ANOTHER.

*Fast. Strong.
No surprises there.*



*Trained well.
Been taught to
use his size.*

Bare fist on the armor. Should have heard a knuckle or two pop.

TAKING ONLY
A DEFENSIVE
POSITION? YOU
SCARED?!

OR
STRATEGIZING?

And he's
not stupid.

TRY THAT
AGAIN! WHO-
EVER THE HELL IS
IN THERE, GO
AHEAD, YOU
SON OF A--!

I CAN'T GET
A VISUAL ON
YOU, SIR, YOU
WELL?

FINE.
GETTING
A NICE
OVERVIEW.

And time to go
on the offense.

Whoa. He should
have felt that a
lot more.





Wow, The train is
still on the tracks.



All right, I've seen
enough. Show's over.



YOU'RE
DONE,
BLANCO.



I DON'T
KNOW
WHO MADE
YOU LIKE
THIS--



--BUT
YOU WON'T
BE PUTTING ANY
OF THEIR WORK
TO USE IN THE
FIELD FOR A
WHILE!



So sit tight,
soldier--



--you're being taken
off active duty.



YOU'VE GOT A
CELL WAITING FOR
YOU AT **BLACK-
GATE!**

NO.



EVAC.



Damn it! Neither one of them
tripped that wire. They're not working
alone--we're being watched.



WE'RE
GONE,
HANG ON
THERE,
MARINE!



NO TIME FOR A PURSUIT! I'M GETTING BEHIND THE WHEEL AGAIN, ALFRED.

I CAN SEE THAT, SIR.

I'M NOT SURE WHAT ANY OF THIS IS ABOUT-- BUT YOU CAN BET I'M GOING TO FIND OUT.



VERY GOOD, SIR. THERE'S ALREADY A FIRE BRIGADE ON HAND FROM--

MY WORD--!

SIR! WE HAVE A PROBLEM! THERE'S A BREACH!

SOMEONE'S IN THE BUNKER!

NO, SIR--



SOMEONE'S INSIDE THE CAVE.

WHAT...

PATCH ME INTO ALL SECURITY FEEDS WE HAVE TO THE CAVE...



...I'LL BE THERE SHORTLY.

I'M JUST CONFUSED AS TO WHAT WE GAINED TODAY.

EXACTLY THAT, PENGUIN--*CONFUSION*. WHEN HE STARTS LOOKING INTO CLAYFACE, BLANCO AND THE FIRES HE'LL FIND THAT THE CITY TOOK OUT PRIVATE CONTRACTS TO COVER THE *INSURANCE* ON THAT STRING OF TENEMENT BUILDINGS.

AND THOSE COMPANIES ARE *DUMMIES*. JUST SHELL CORPORATIONS.



FOR WHOP

NO ONE. THAT'S GOING TO CONFUSE THE BATMAN. AND MOST IMPORTANT, YOU KNOW WHO THIS HAS *NOTHING* TO DO WITH?





I THINK IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS. I JUST HAD A NUMBER OF FORMER "RESIDENTS" OF ARKHAM ASYLUM KILL YOUR SECURITY DETAIL.

BUT YOU'RE GOING TO WALK OUT OF HERE ALIVE.

THAT IS, AS LONG AS YOU UNDERSTAND THE OBVIOUS...



WAYNE MANOR.

"I DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOU SAID THE CAVE WAS *BREACHED*. HOW CAN IT BE BREACHED IF NONE OF THE *EXTERNAL SENSORS* WERE TRIPPED?"

SIR, THE INTERNAL MOTION DETECTORS WERE TRIGGERED. FOR SIX MINUTES SOMEONE OR SOME ONES WERE MOVING AROUND THE CAVE.

I'M NOT SEEING ANYTHING.

AND ALL THE READINGS ON MY HANDHELD'S AREN'T SHOWING ANYONE IN HERE BUT ME.

WAIT...

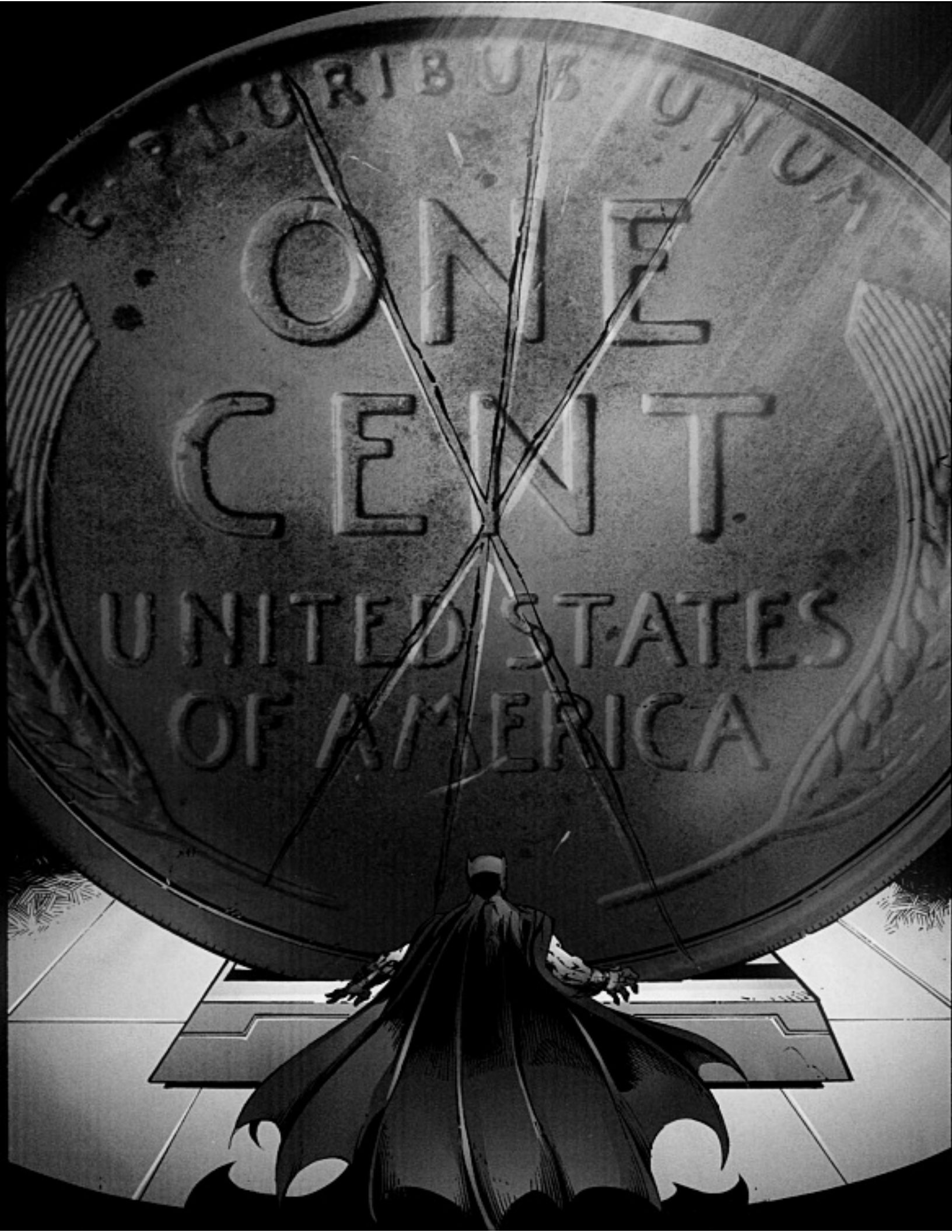
I'LL TAKE A LOOK AROUND, BUT IT MAY HAVE BEEN JUST AN ELECTRICAL SHORT. WE HAVEN'T BEEN TOO DILIGENT WITH THE UPKEEP ON THE...

THE COIN...

THE COIN, SIR?

IT'S BEEN UNCOVERED.







Careless.

THUK THUK
THUK THUK



Complacent. Didn't sweep the cave, relied on the hardware.

Cocky. Thinned out the body armor for better maneuverability, left me vulnerable to high-powered trangs.



Will try to learn from this...

JUST TWO QUESTIONS FOR YOU...



...if I don't die.

WHO ARE
YOU?

AND WHERE'S
THE *REAL*
BATMAN?

TO BE
CONCLUDED

Still on vacation...
next stop: Southeast Asia!

Talk soon,
DD

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BATMAN 698, November, 2009. Published monthly by DC Comics, 1700 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BATMAN, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box
308, Canons, NY 10920. Annual subscription rate (12 issues) \$30.00. Canadian subscribers must add \$12.00 for postage and GST. GST # is R125821072. All foreign countries must add \$12.00
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is manufactured at a facility holding chain-of-custody certification. This paper is made with sustainably managed North American fiber.
Printed by World Color Press, Inc. Montreal, QC, Canada. 8/76/09.

DC Comics, a Warner Bros. Entertainment Company



A Preview of R.E.B.E.L.S. Annual #1: STARRO THE CONQUEROR!

FOR YEARS, GIANT STAR-SHAPED CREATURES HAVE PROWLED YOUR GALAXY, ENSLAVING WORLDS IN THE NAME OF STARRO THE CONQUEROR. AT LEAST THREE TIMES, THE JUSTICE LEAGUE HAS UNITED TO REPEL SUCH A CONQUEST OF EARTH.

NOW IT STANDS REVEALED THAT THESE "MOTHERSTARS" HAVE ALWAYS ANSWERED TO A HIGHER POWER--A COSMIC WARLORD WHO LEADS A MIGHTY HORDE, THE ACCUMULATED MILITARY MIGHT OF NINE GALAXIES. ARRIVING IN THE LAWLESS VEGA SECTOR, MY MASTER HAS COME TO CRUSH THE MILKY WAY BENEATH HIS ARMORED HEEL...



THE STORM-DAUGHTER
STOOD HER GROUND
AGAINST MY MASTER...
UNTIL HE SHATTERED
IT BENEATH HER.

YOU
SHALL HAVE
TO FIGHT
HARDER!



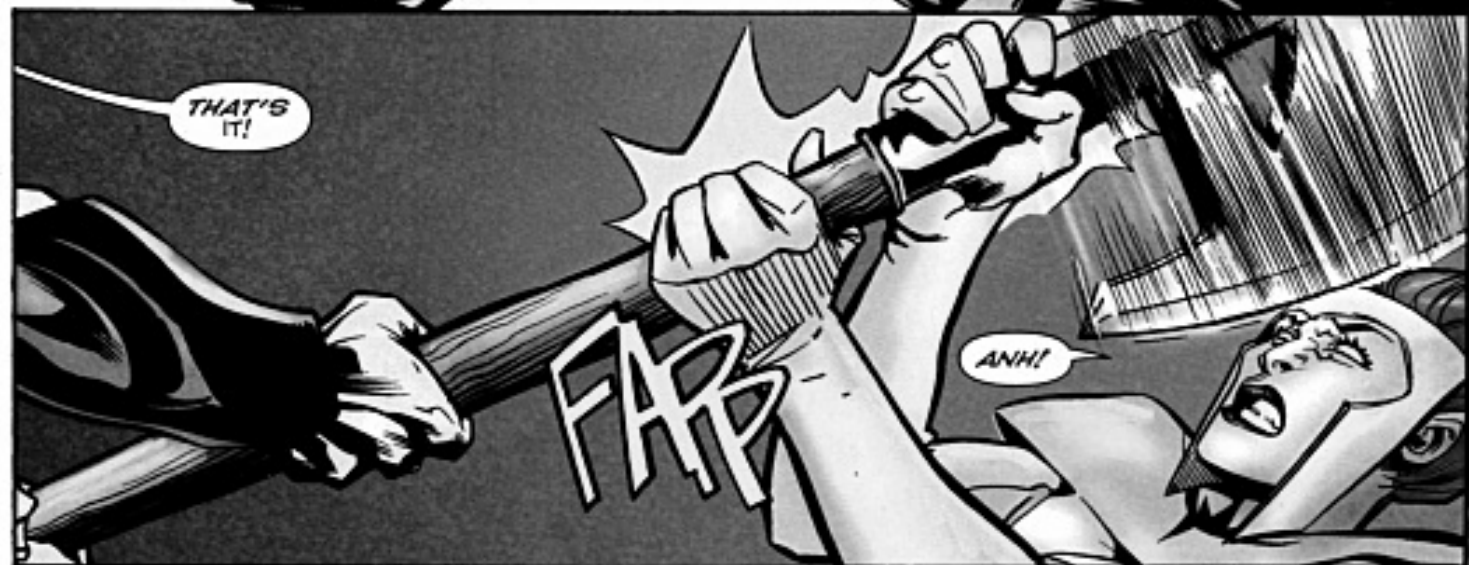
HALF
MEASURES
WON'T
DO!



THAT'S
IT!

FARP

ANH!





THE CALM IN THE
STORM-DAUGHTER'S
EYE GAVE WAY
TO NAKED RAGE.



ALAS, VIOLENCE
IS A THING VERY
MUCH LIKE FIRE.



CONTROLLED, IT IS
AN EFFECTIVE TOOL.

BUT IN THE HANDS OF A
NOVICE, BEREFT OF TEMPERANCE,
DESPERATELY LASHING OUT...



...THE FLAME
SPREADS UNCHECKED,
CONSUMING ALL
IN ITS PATH.





A STRILD STORM-DAUGHTER
WAS A BIOMANCER, THOUGH SHE
DID NOT KNOW THE NAME FOR IT.



SHE DREW UPON THE
COLLECTIVE LIFE FORCE
OF HER ENTIRE WORLD.
IT WAS THE WELLSPRING
OF HER POWER.

FOR EVERY SEED
SHE CAUSED TO
SPROUT, SOMEWHERE
ELSE A BLOSSOM
WITHERED.



AND ON THAT DAY, SHE CALLED
UPON THE LIFE FORCE OF
VARIDIAN AS NEVER BEFORE...



...ONLY TO
FIND THAT
A WELLSPRING
CAN RUN DRY.



A GREEN GIANT SCAN



LIKE IT?
BUY IT!